

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USNMR SHAPE PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 066294

EXDIS, ADDEES PLS HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT BONN 05243 SENT ACTION SECSTATE NATO BRUSSELS
INFO LONDON 24 MAR 77

QUOTE S E C R E T BONN 05243

EXDIS

USMISSION NATO ALSO NIACT IMMEDIATE FOR SECDEF BROWN
DEPARTMENT PASS AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE TO SECDEF
IMMEDIATE AND USNMR SHAPE PRIORITY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, OCON, MILI, AWACS, GW, MPOL, PARM

SUBJ: MY CALL ON DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER ON EVE OF NATO
MINISTERIAL.

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1. SUMMARY: I SAW MINISTER LEBER ON THE EVE OF HIS
DEPARTURE FOR THE MEETING OF DEFENSE MINISTERS IN
BRUSSELS. HE CONFIRMED THE EXCELLENT IMPRESSION
THAT HE HAD RECEIVED DURING HIS AMERICAN VISIT LAST
WEEK. ON THE SPECIFIC PROBLEM OF AWACS, HE GAVE NO
INDICATION THAT HE HAD MADE PROGRESS IN CONVINCING
THE CHANCELLOR TO ALLOW HIM TO MAKE A TRULY POSITIVE

STATEMENT TOMORROW. THE FACT THAT LEBER IS PLAYING HIS CARDS CLOSE TO HIS CHEST IS ALSO CLEAR, HOWEVER. ON THE TANK HARMONIZATION PROGRAM, LEBER IS CONVINCED BOTH THAT THE UK 120 MM RIFLED-BORE GUN WILL NOT BE READY THIS YEAR AND THAT THE US 105 MM GUN HAS REACHED THE END OF ITS DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL. THUS, HE FEELS THE US WILL SOONER OR LATER HAVE TO ADOPT THE GERMAN 120 MM SMOOTH-BORE GUN. END SUMMARY.

2. I SPENT AN HOUR WITH MINISTER LEBER EARLY THURSDAY EVENING. THE WAY HE DESCRIBED HIS RECENT AMERICAN VISIT FULLY CONFIRMED HIS SUBORDINATES' REPORTS (REFTELS A AND B) OF HOW PLEASED HE HAD BEEN WITH HIS AMERICAN RECEPTION. HE WANTED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO BE SURE THAT I WAS AWARE OF ALL THE TOP ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS WITH WHOM HE HAD MET.

AWACS

3. I SPENT SOME TIME PROBING IN AN ATTEMPT TO FIND OUT WHAT SUCCESS LEBER HAD HAD IN OBTAINING THE CHANCELLOR'S AGREEMENT FOR HIM TO MAKE A POSITIVE STATEMENT AT THE MARCH 25 MINISTERIAL (REFTEL C). WHAT LEBER TOLD ME WAS NOT PARTICULARLY REASSURING. HE APPARENTLY HAS NOT SEEN THE CHANCELLOR SINCE HIS RETURN. HE HAS BRIEFED THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE OF THE BUNDESTAG AS TO THE RESULTS OF HIS AMERICAN VISIT AND DISCUSSED AWACS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER WHEN THEY MET IN WASHINGTON.

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4. THE POSITIVE SIDE, LEBER HIMSELF REMAINS COMMITTED TO AWACS. HE MENTIONED HOW IMPRESSED HE HAD BEEN BY THE AWACS BRIEFING HE HAD BEEN GIVEN BY AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL JONES. HE SAID HE FOUND THE GENERAL HIMSELF TO BE CONVINCED OF THE VALUE OF AWACS AND PERSUASIVE IN CONVINCING OTHERS OF ITS VALUE. PARENTHETICALLY, LEBER REMARKED "YOUR PRESIDENT HAS A VERY GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF AWACS, BUT MY CHANCELLOR HAS NOT EVEN BEGUN TO BUILD SUCH A KNOWLEDGE."

5. I ASKED IF LEBER HAD BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT OF AN AWACS DEMONSTRATION FOR GERMANY WHILE IN WASHINGTON, AND THE MINISTER REPLIED THAT HE HAD (REFTEL D). HE SAID IT SHOULD BE SHOWN AND BRIEFED TO THE CHANCELLOR AND TO BUNDESTAG MEMBERS OF THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES. HOWEVER, LEBER HAD NO SPECIFIC TIMES TO SUGGEST YET. HE PROMISED TO LET THE EMBASSY KNOW

WHEN HE FELT THE TIME WAS RIPE, AND SUGGESTED THAT THE DEMONSTRATION BE DESIGNATED AN "EXERCISE".

6. WE DISCUSSED THE QUESTION OF THE FRG SHARE OF AN EVENTUAL AWACS PROGRAM IN SOME DETAIL. LEBER GAVE THE IMPRESSION HE LOOKED UPON THE QUESTION AS A KIND OF POKER GAME, ALTHOUGH HE CALLED IT A "JIGSAW PUZZLE".

HE SAID THAT IF HE WANTED TO KILL AWACS, ALL HE WOULD HAVE TO DO WOULD BE TO ACCEDE TO UK DEFENSE MINISTER MULLEY'S WISHES AND MAKE A POSITIVE PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO ATTEMPT TO GET HIS GOVERNMENT TO PAY 26 PERCENT OF THE COST. THIS WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY A US COMMITMENT TO PAY 33 PERCENT, AND SO ALMOST 60 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL COST WOULD BE COVERED. THIS WOULD TURN THE PROJECT INTO A JOINT US/FRG ONE. THE UK'S REACTION WOULD BE UNCERTAIN, BUT THE OTHER NATO ALLIES

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WOULD WASH THEIR HANDS OF THE SUBJECT. I ARGUED THAT IT MIGHT RATHER INDUCE THEM TO BE FORTHCOMING, BUT LEBER REMAINED UNCONVINCED.

7. CONTINUING WITH HIS LINE OF ARGUMENT, LEBER SAID THAT MULLEY HAD TOLD HIM THE LAST TIME THEY MET THAT IT WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH FOR THE FRG TO SAY IT WAS FOR AWACS IN PRINCIPLE. NOR WOULD IT BE ENOUGH FOR THE FRG TO PLEDGE A CERTAIN PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL COST. THE UK REQUIRED GUARANTEES THAT 100 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL FUNDING WAS ASSURED. LEBER ADDED "I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT MULLEY WANTS. IN ANY CASE, I'LL FIND OUT AS I AM HAVING BREAKFAST WITH HIM TOMORROW."

8. WE ALSO DISCUSSED POSSIBLE FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN THE AWACS PROGRAM. LEBER SAID HE COULD NOT IMAGINE FRANCE NOT BEING INTERESTED. MOREOVER, IF FRANCE WERE TO BENEFIT FROM AWACS, IT MUST ALSO HELP PAY FOR IT. LEBER WENT ON TO SAY THAT AWACS MUST HAVE FRENCH PARTICIPATION TO BE A NATO PROJECT. (I DID NOT PRESS HIM FURTHER ON THIS ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM FOR FEAR THAT HE MIGHT DECIDE TO MAKE FRENCH PARTICIPATION A CONDITION FOR FRG PARTICIPATION).

9. LEBER CLOSED OUR AWACS DISCUSSION WITH HIS WELL-KNOWN PLEAS FOR MORE TIME. IN THIS CONNECTION HE NOTED THAT THE GERMAN AIR FORCE HAD NOT ESTABLISHED AN OFFICIAL REQUIREMENT FOR AWACS. UNTIL IT DID, HE RAN THE RISK OF HAVING THE BUNDESTAG COMMITTEE ASK HIM SARCASTICALLY IF THE REQUIREMENT HAD BEEN SET BY THE AMERICANS. THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE ARMED FORCES

WAS, ON THE OTHER HAND, IN FAVOR OF AWACS, AND THE GERMAN AIR FORCE COULD BE CONVINCED. ONLY IT WOULD TAKE TIME.

THE TANK HARMONIZATION PROBLEM

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10. AS ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE, MINISTER LEBER'S MARCH 18 NEWS CONFERENCE MADE IT SOUND AS IF THERE WERE NO LIKELIHOOD OF THE US ADOPTING THE 105 MM GUN WITH ITS IMPROVED AMMUNITION FOR THE XM 1 (REFTEL A). IN OUR DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE TANK HARMONIZATION PROBLEM, HE INITIALLY TOOK THE POSITION THAT THE CHOICE WAS ONLY BETWEEN THE EXISTING 120 MM GERMAN SMOOTH-BORE GUN AND THE 120 MM BRITISH RIFLED-BORE GUN WHICH IS ONLY ON THE DRAWING BOARDS.

11. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT THE HILLIS RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE (WITH WHICH HE WAS THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR), HE TOOK A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT TACK. HE MAINTAINED THAT THE UK GUN WOULD NOT BE READY FOR PRODUCTION UNTIL 1981 OR 1982 AND SO COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED. THE US HAD AGREED NOT TO WAIT BEYOND 1977 FOR THE BRITISH GUN. IT WAS POSSIBLE, HE SAID, THAT THE US 105 MM GUN WITH ITS DEPLETED URANIUM SHELL MIGHT DO AS WELL AS THE GERMAN 120 MM GUN AS IT IS TODAY. THUS, THE US MIGHT NOT ADOPT THE GERMAN 120 MM GUN RIGHT AWAY.

12. THE IMPORTANT THING WAS THAT THE US TANK TURRET WAS CAPABLE OF TAKING EITHER THE 105 MM OR THE 120 MM GUN. THE 105 MM GUN WAS IN HIS VIEW AT THE END OF ITS DEVELOPMENT CYCLE, WHILE THE GERMAN GUN WAS ONLY AT THE BEGINNING OF ITS. AND LEBER WAXED ALMOST LYRICAL AS HE SPOKE OF THE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF THE 120 MM. HIS CONCLUSION WAS THAT THE US SOONER OR LATER WOULD HAVE TO ADOPT THE 120 MM GERMAN SMOOTH-BORE. AS LONG AS THE TANK TURRET WAS DUAL CAPABLE, THIS WAS CERTAIN.

MOU ON RECIPROCAL PROCUREMENT

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13. I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO TELL MINISTER LEBER

OF US READINESS TO DEVELOP A US/FRG PROCUREMENT MOU
ALONG THE LINES OF THE ONE WE HAVE WITH THE UK
(REFTEL E). LEBER EXPRESSED GRATIFICATION AND SAID
WE SHOULD ESTABLISH A SMALL AD HOC WORKING GROUP
ON THE SUBJECT.

CONCLUSION

14. LEBER ENDED OUR DISCUSSION BY SAYING AGAIN THAT
HIS TRIP TO AMERICA HAD BEEN VERY GOOD AND VERY
SUCCESSFUL. HE ALSO REMARKED WHAT AN EXCELLENT
IMPRESSION THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAD MADE ON HIM.
STOESSEL

UNQUOTE VANCE

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